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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-fourth session
Agenda item 10

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Letter dated 17 March 1998 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Bulgaria to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights

I have the honour to forward, herewith enclosed,* the text of a Joint Declaration of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Countries of South-Eastern Europe of 10 March 1998.

I would kindly request you to circulate the text of the Declaration as an official document of the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on Human Rights under agenda item 10.

(Signed): Konstantin ANDREEV
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

* The attachment is circulated as received in the language of submission only.

ANNEX

JOINT DECLARATION OF THE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF COUNTRIES OF SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Countries of South-Eastern Europe, Mr. Andrei Plesu, Mr. Blagoj Handziski, Mr. Ismail Cem, Mrs. Nadezhda Mihaylova and Mr. Theodoros Pangalos, express their serious concern with the deteriorating situation in Kosovo and with the grave consequences of an inter-ethnic conflict and its possible spill-over in the region.

The Ministers declare the commitment of their States to take all appropriate steps in order to prevent such a development in the region of South-Eastern Europe.

The Ministers reiterate that a first step to reduce tensions in Kosovo is the initiation of a genuine dialogue between the Serb authorities and the ethnic Albanians and call on both parties to take prompt measures to that end. Both parties should condemn and refrain from use of violence as a means to resolve their conflict.

They deeply regret the suppression by the Serbian police of peaceful demonstrations in Kosovo and the subsequent unrestrained use of force that has resulted in fatalities. At the same time they urge all organisations of the Kosovo Albanian community to make clear their opposition to violence and terrorism as a tool to seek change. They condemn terrorist actions to achieve political goals as well as violence as a means to repress political views.

The Ministers call for the full respect of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the ethnic Albanian population. They declare that a lasting solution to the Kosovo problem can be based only on the full protection of the rights of Albanians, Serbs and all others living in Kosovo in accordance with the UN Charter, Helsinki principles and OSCE standards.

The Ministers call for the immediate and full implementation of the Agreement on education concluded in 1996 between President Milosevic and Mr. Rugova, leader of the Albanians in Kosovo.

The Ministers underline that the solution to the Kosovo problem should be searched in full respect to the existing borders. They call on all organisations of the ethnic Albanians to deny any secessionist policies and to fully respect the territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The Ministers call on Belgrade to face the problems with utmost responsibility and search for mutually acceptable solutions based on granting a large autonomy for Kosovo within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The Ministers believe that the integration of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia into the international community would be to the benefit of that country and would strengthen the stability of the region. They also recognise that considerable progress towards the solution of the Kosovo issue will contribute to this end.

The Ministers call on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to enable the return of the international monitors in Kosovo as a means of preventive diplomacy.

The Ministers declare the readiness of their States to play an active role in the efforts to find a peaceful and political solution to all issues related to the Kosovo problem. In this framework they also welcome the initiatives of the United States, the European Union and the Contact Group.

The Ministers call on all States in the region and beyond to support this Declaration and join the efforts towards preserving the peace, stability and security in South-Eastern Europe.

Sofia, 10 March 1998

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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-fourth session
Agenda item 4

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES, INCLUDING PALESTINE

Letter dated 15 March 1998 from the Permanent Observer for Palestine to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the High Commissioner for Human Rights

For the fifth day running, the Israeli occupation authorities continue firing at Palestinian civilians in the various Palestinian cities and villages. As a result, on this fifth day alone, 16 Palestinian civilians have sustained injuries from live and rubber bullets, including a child under 16 years of age whose injury was fatal. Five journalists and cameramen were also injured, some sustaining head injuries.

This continued recourse to arbitrary killings and injury against the unarmed Palestinians confirms the Israeli insistence on trampling human rights for the Palestinian people, in particular the right to life. These acts further confirm the systematic policy adopted by the Government of Israel to inflict grave bodily harm upon the Palestinians, through repeated injury as a result of the use of live and rubber bullets, in contravention to the international conventions which prohibit such acts and which consider them crimes of war and crimes against humanity.

I request you to kindly circulate this letter as an official document to the members of the Commission on Human Rights during its fifty-fourth session, under item 4 of its agenda.

(Signed) Nabil RAMLAWI
Ambassador
Permanent Observer for Palestine
to the United Nations Office
in Geneva